Supreme Court, U.S.
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In the

Supreme Court of the United States

OCTOBER TERM, 1971

No. 71-151

HARRY K. WASOFF,

Appellant,

v.

AMERICAN AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE COMPANY,

Appellee.

PETITION FOR A WRIT OF CERTIORARI TO THE UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS FOR THE FIFTH CIRCUIT

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Index

	Page
Opinions Below	1
Jurisdiction	2
Questions Presented By This Writ	2
Constitutional Procedures and Rules of Court	3
Statement of the Case	3
Reasons for Granting the Writ	5
Conclusion	10
Appendix A	A-1
Appendix B	B-1

Page

Bass v. Hoagland, 172 F. 2d 205 (5th Cir., 1949) 9

Brown v. Pennsylvania R. Co., 282 F. 2d 522 (2nd Cir., 1960) 6

Castlegate, Inc. v. National Tea Co., 34 F.R.D. 221 (1963) 7

Delta Theatres, Inc. v. Paramount Pictures, Inc., 398 F. 2d 323 (5th Cir., 1968), cert. den. 393 U.S. 1050 7

De Meulenaere v. Rockwell Mfg., 31 F.R.D. 575, aff'd 312 F. 2d 209, cert. den. 374 U.S. 813 5

Di Vito v. Fidelity & Deposit Co. of Md., 361 F. 2d 936 (7th Cir., 1966) 6

Dyotherm Corp. v. Turbo Machinery Co., 392 F. 2d 146 (3rd Cir., 1968) 7

Greenspahn v. Joseph E. Seagram & Sons, 186 F. 2d 616 (2nd Cir., 1951) 9

Hoffman v. Celebrezzi, 405 F. 2d 833 (8th Cir., 1969) 6

Hovey v. Elliott, 167 U.S. 409 (1897) 9

In the Matter of Marachowsky Stores Co., 188 F. 2d 686 (7th Cir. 1951), cert. den. 342 U.S. 822 9

Kender v. General Expressways, Limited, 34 F.R.D. 237 (1963) 6

Laguna Royalty Co. v. Marsh, 350 F. 2d 817 (5th Cir., 1965) 6

Michigan Surety Co. v. Service Machinery, 277 F. 2d 531 (5th Cir., 1960) 6

Mullane v. Central Hanover Bank & Trust Co., 339 U.S. 306 (1950) 9

Petition of Pui Lan Yu, 20 F.R.D. 399 (1957) 7

Page

Sandee Mfg. Co. v. Rohm & Haas Co., 298 F. 2d 41 (7th Cir., 1962) 7

Savoretti v. Rodriquez-Jiminez, 252 F. 2d 290 (5th Cir. 1958) 9

Serio v. Badger Mutual Ins. Co., 266 F. 2d 418 (5th Cir., 1954), cert. den. 361 U.S. 832 6

U. S. Fidelity & Guaranty Co. v. Lawrenson, 34 F.R.D. 121 (1964) 9

Woodham v. American Cystascope, 335 F. 2d 551 (5th Cir., 1964) 8

Constitutional Provisions:
United States Constitution:
Fifth Amendment 3, 4

Rules of Court:
Federal Rules of Civil Procedure:
Rule 60(b) 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10

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No. .....

HARRY K. WASOFF,

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v.

AMERICAN AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE COMPANY,

Appellee.

PETITION FOR A WRIT OF CERTIORARI TO THE UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS FOR THE FIFTH CIRCUIT

To the Honorable Supreme Court of the United States:

The petitioner, Harry K. Wasoff, respectfully prays that a writ of certiorari issue to review the judgment and opinion of the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit, entered in this proceeding on May 4, 1971.

OPINIONS BELOW

There was no formal opinion of the United States District Court for the Northern District of Texas. An excerpt

from the record of that Court is reproduced in Appendix A to this Petition and indicates that Court's dismissal of this cause.

The Per Curiam opinion of the Court of Appeals affirming the District Court is attached as Appendix B and is reported at 441 F. 2d 268.

JURISDICTION

This Court's jurisdiction is invoked under 28 U.S.C. § 1254(1). The order of the Court of Appeals, affirming the District Court, was entered on May 4, 1971.

QUESTIONS PRESENTED BY THIS WRIT

The petition was dismissed involuntarily in the District Court for failure to prosecute this action after a delay of less than one week. Efforts to reinstate the action were dismissed or denied by the District Court 352 days after the filing of the motion for reinstatement without notice or hearing. This procedure was reviewed and affirmed by the Court of Appeals in an action brought by the petitioner immediately after the denial of reinstatement in the District Court. The questions presented are:

1. Whether Rule 60(b) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure contemplates notice and hearing before denying the relief accorded a movant by the Rule.

2. Whether the absence of a hearing before denying relief accorded under Rule 60(b) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure is equivalent to a taking of property in violation

of the protection of the 5th Amendment to the Constitution of the United States.

3. Whether the federal interest in uniformity of relief in each District Court is applicable to Rule 60(b) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure.

4. Whether the relief available under Rule 60(b) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure is to be administered in a uniform manner through guidelines which effectively establish the limits of the judiciary's discretionary standard.

CONSTITUTIONAL AND RULES PROVISIONS

The Fifth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States provides in pertinent part as follows:

> "* * * nor be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; * * *"

Rule 60(b) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, dealing with reinstatement after dismissal, provides as follows:

> "On motion and upon such terms as are just, the court may relieve a party or his legal representative from a final judgment, order, or proceeding * * *."

STATEMENT OF THE CASE

This cause was originated in the Texas state court by the petitioner and was subsequently removed by the defendant to the United States District Court due to diversity of citizenship. The action was primarily concerned with benefits due the petitioner for losses underwritten by a homeowners policy of insurance; however, the merits of that claim

were never reached as the action was dismissed under Rule 41(b) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure by the District Court.

The basis for this dismissal was that the newly-acquired counsel miscalculated the time for appearance; as a result of this error, the District Court, within two days after appearance was to have been properly made, dismissed for want of prosecution. Immediately following the dismissal, the petitioner moved for reinstatement, which, after a 352-day delay by the District Court was denied without opinion, notice to the petitioner, or hearing on the motion which had also been accompanied and supported by a memorandum brief.

Appeal to the Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit was immediately taken. The petitoner was given oral argument by the Court of Appeals; however, that Court affirmed the District Court without opinion.

It appears from contrasting this action with many other cases which invoke the relief provided by Rule 60(b) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure that no uniform policy is established within the judiciary for application of this Rule. Therefore, Certiorari is sought to review the application and administration of Rule 60(b) and to resolve this problem of an unpredictable application of this Rule as evidenced by the vascillating decisions of the lower Courts when utilizing Rule 60(b) in cases containing similar facts. This practice renders precedent useless and inserts a disordered practice into a system where uniformity is the established guideline.

REASONS FOR GRANTING THE WRIT

Without question, Rule 60(b) is considered one which demands a liberal construction and therefore utilization in cases where the facts indicate a necessity for vacating prior judgments. However, the espoused purpose of the Rule has been defeated by the reluctance of courts to reconsider judgments, since crowded dockets and the need for expeditious justice have usurped the time necessary to consider these motions. The effect of this lack of usage of Rule 60(b) has been to increase appellate docket caseload and ultimately to deny justice toward those litigants who should have been given added time in the trial court.

(i) Considerations which should be utilized by the Trial Courts in applying Rule 60(b) are largely ignored

By the terms of the Rule itself, relief under Rule 60(b) is addressed to the sound discretion of the trial court. However, it is also to be noted that the discretion of the courts in applying the Rule has sought to be guided by the application of "sound legal principles." This restraint was noted in *De Meulenaere v. Rockwell Mfg.*, 31 F.R.D. 575; aff'd 312 F. 2d 209; cert. den. 374 U.S. 813, wherein the courts agreed that they were

> "* * * fully aware of the seriousness of dismissing [an] action with prejudice for lack of prosecution. It would deny the plaintiffs their day in court and this is not desirable. As Chief Judge Clark stated in *Gill v. Stolow*, 240 F. 2d 669, 670 (2nd Cir. 1957) * * *. 'In final analysis, a court has the responsibility to do justice between man and man; and general principles cannot justify denial of a party's fair day in court

> except upon a serious showing of wilful default' * * *. Chief Judge Clark's warning that a court should not dismiss an action with prejudice except on *very substantial evidence*, should not be taken lightly." (emphasis added)

The same principle, coupled with the theory of liberal construction of the Rule, was noted in *Serio v. Badger Mutual Ins. Co.*, 266 F. 2d 418 (5th Cir., 1954), cert. den. 361 U.S. 832; *Laguna Royalty Co. v. Marsh*, 350 F. 2d 817 (5th Cir., 1965), and *Michigan Surety Co. v. Service Machinery*, 277 F. 2d 531 (5th Cir., 1960). However, at the same time, courts in *Hoffman v. Celebrezzi*, 405 F. 2d 833 (8th Cir., 1969) and *Di Vito v. Fidelity & Deposit Co. of Md.*, 361 F. 2d 936 (7th Cir., 1966), indicated that "very exceptional circumstances" were a necessary prerequisite to Rule 60(b) relief, while other courts in *Brown v. Pennsylvania R. Co.*, 282 F. 2d 522, (2nd Cir. 1960), cert. den. 365 U.S. 818 and *Kender v. General Expressways, Limited*, 34 F.R.D. 237 (1963) required clear and convincing evidence to allow relief from judgment.

In addition to the prevailing conflict as to what standard is currently incumbent upon the movant in order to invoke Rule 60(b) relief, other courts have utilized such tests as

(1) realization of the harsh result achieved,

(2) lack of dilatory conduct attributable to the movant,

(3) examination of the procedural history of the case and no finding of substantial delay,

(4) the weighing of the delay caused by the movant against the federal policy favoring litigation on the merits, and

(5) establishment of a need for substantial evidence indicating an excessive delay before dismissal is justified.

Each of these tests may be found in *Delta Theatres, Inc. v. Paramount Pictures, Inc.*, 398 F. 2d 323 (5th Cir., 1968), cert. den. 393 U.S. 1050; *Castlegate, Inc. v. National Tea Co.*, 34 F.R.D. 221 (1963), *Sandee Mfg. Co. v. Rohm and Haas Co.*, 298 F. 2d 41 (7th Cir., 1962), *Dyotherm Corp. v. Turbo Machinery Co.*, 392 F. 2d 146 (3rd Cir., 1968), as well as the Second Circuit opinion in *De Meulenaere v. Rockwell* noted above. However, at no time has it been affirmatively decided which test, tests, or combination thereof the movant must meet to qualify for relief under Rule 60(b).

The Rule evolved from a California rule of procedure. Utilizing that background, an early California federal court, in *Petition of Pui Lan Yu*, 20 F.R.D. 399 (1957), in interpreting the federal rule, noted that the burden is on the movant to show justification for Rule 60(b) relief; consequently, it would appear that a uniform interpretation of that burden is necessary. As no established guideline for the application of Rule 60(b) has been positively established, the procedure which invokes the Rule has been subordinated to a summary and arbitrary process. This process varies from court to court and circuit to circuit and depends to a great degree upon the attitude of the individual courts toward reinstatement. In this manner, the movant is forced to design his motion toward favoring the policy of the individual

court rather than utilizing federal guidelines to the utmost degree. In light of this practice, it is appropriate that this Court acting in its administrative capacity review the procedure and test to be applied in granting or denying reinstatement.

(ii) Decisions of Trial Courts which are based on varying considerations without the benefit of hearing violate due process

In *Woodham v. American Cystascope*, 335 F. 2d 551 (5th Cir., 1964), it was held that

> "Rule 1 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure (was) designed to temper the discretionary power of the District Court: the rules "shall be construed to secure the just, speedy, and inexpensive determination of every action. The force of this first and greatest of the Rules should not be blunted by district court's exaggerating the importance of local rules and enforcing such rules through inappropriate, over-rigorous sanctions."

In most cases, local rules or procedures which are intended to complement the federal rules are mere rote housekeeping measures. However, local practice which deprives opportunity of hearing and notice to a movant invoking Rule 60(b) is a violation of the established right of a party to show cause for reinstatement. As it has been previously indicated, the burden is on the movant to show why he should be granted relief under the Rule; however, no procedure is outlined by the Rule through which he can fulfill this requirement. The petitioner therefore submits that this Court should now determine the procedural rights accorded by due process after a judgment has been rendered and should formulate a notice and hearing requirement before denial of reinstatement.

This Court, in *Mullane v. Central Hanover Bank & Trust Co.*, 339 U.S. 306 (1950), stated that

> "An elementary and fundamental requirement of due process *in any proceeding which is to be accorded finality* is notice reasonably calculated, under all circumstances, to appraise interested parties of the pendency of the action and afford them an opportunity to present their objections." (emphasis added)

There can be no question that denial of relief under Rule 60(b) constitutes a final judgment. See *In the Matter of Marachowsky Stores Co.*, 188 F. 2d 686 (7th Cir., 1951), cert. den. 342 U.S. 822; *Greenspahn v. Joseph E. Seagram & Sons*, 186 F. 2d 616 (2nd Cir., 1951). It must therefore be assumed that this Court meant for this rule to be applied in the Rule 60(b) situation. Failure to provide the notice and opportunity of hearing made available through due process would appear to invalidate the resulting decree as a judicial determination entitled to respect in any tribunal. *Bass v. Hoagland*, 172 F. 2d 205 (5th Cir., 1949) and *Savoretti v. Rodriquez-Jiminez*, 252 F. 2d 290 (5th Cir., 1958). This proposition was also announced in *Hovey v. Elliott*, 167 U.S. 409 (1897).

Denial of reinstatement effectively deprives the litigant of his cause of action. As there seems to be little question that a cause of action is a property right, this type of deprivation is subject to the normal requirements of due process. Although one District in *U. S. Fidelity & Guaranty Co. v. Lawrenson*, 34 F.R.D. 121 (1964), held that motions

clearly without substance were not entitled to a hearing, this Court has not addressed the problem specifically. Frivolity may indeed be good cause for denying due process; however, levity is neither a part of the petitioner's motion, nor is it a traditional reason for denying a constitutional guarantee to a litigant.

The denial of hearing and notice is the practice rather than the exception. No justification for this procedure is noted in Rule 60(b) and the practice is one of convenience rather than law. To the contrary, due process would appear to require more stringent protection of the movant's rights under Rule 60(b) rather than demeaning the effect of the rule to its present position of a mere troublesome post-trial motion which further crowds the trial docket. Certiorari should be granted to re-establish a uniformity of procedure for reinstating causes in accordance with the requirements of due process and the clear intent of *Mullane*.

CONCLUSION

For the foregoing reasons, this petition for writ of certiorari should be granted. The questions raised are of general and recurring importance to the administrative processes within the federal judiciary. A review by this Court of the conflicting application of the relief afforded by Rule 60(b) throughout the circuits and determination of the test

to be utilized before relief may be granted is necessary to insure that the federal interest in uniformity is maintained.

Respectfully submitted,

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A copy of this Petition for Writ of Certiorari is being mailed to Mr. Franklin Perry, of Thompson, Coe, Cousins, Irons and Porter, 920 Hartford Building, Dallas, Texas 75201, attorney for appellee, on the day of , 1971.

_____
Robert A. Fanning
Harlan Harper, Jr.

APPENDIX A

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
NORTHERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS
DALLAS DIVISION

Civil Action No. 3-3882-A

HARRY K. WASOFF,

Plaintiff,

v.

AMERICAN AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE COMPANY,

Defendant.

JUDGMENT

It appearing that no counsel for Plaintiff has appeared herein as required by order of this Court dated the 28th day of August 1969,

IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED, ADJUDGED AND DECREED that this cause be and it is hereby DISMISSED for want of prosecution.

Costs are taxed against the Plaintiff.
Dated this 1st day of October, 1969.

/s/ JOE E. ESTES

United States District Judge

APPDENIX B

IN THE

United States Court of Appeals

FOR THE FIFTH CIRCUIT

No. 30923

HARRY K. WASOFF,

Plaintiff-Appellant,

v.

AMERICAN AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE COMPANY,

Defendant-Appellee.

Appeal from the United States District Court for the Northern District of Texas

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(May 4, 1971)

Before O'SULLIVAN*, THORNBERRY and DYER, Circuit Judges.

PER CURIAM: AFFIRMED. See Local Rule 21.[1]

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* Senior Circuit Judge, 6th Circuit, sitting by designation.

[1] See *NLRB v. Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America*, 5th Cir. 1970, 430 F. 2d 966.

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HARRY K. WASOFF,

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AMERICAN AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE COMPANY,

Respondent.

BRIEF IN OPPOSITION TO PETITION FOR WRIT OF CERTIORARI

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SUBJECT INDEX

	Page
Opinion Below	2
Statement of the Case	2
Argument	6
I. This case is uniquely controlled by its own peculiar facts	6
II. The decision below is clearly correct.	
A. Relief from a final judgment may not be used as a substitute for an appeal	7
B. Under the facts of the case petitioner received the hearing to which he was entitled	8
C. Relief from a final judgment is to be granted only under exceptional circumstances which petitioner failed to show	9
III. There is no constitutional right to a specific type of hearing or to an opportunity to present oral argument thereat	10
Conclusion	12
Appendix A	A-1
Appendix B	B-1
Appendix C	C-1

TABLE OF AUTHORITIES

Page

Cases

Ackermann v. United States, 340 U.S. 193 (1950) 7, 9

F.C.C. v. Station WJR, 337 U.S. 265 (1949) 11

Farmers Co-Op v. Strand, 382 F. 2d 224 (8th Cir. 1967), cert. den. 389 U.S. 1014 (1967) 8, 9

Glens Falls Insurance Co. v. Peters, 386 S.W. 2d 529 (Tex. Sup. Ct. 1965) 3

Hulson v. Atchison T. & S.F. Ry., 289 F. 2d 826 (7th Cir. 1961), cert. den. 368 U.S. 835 (1961). 9

Morrow v. Topping, 437 F. 2d 1155 (9th Cir. 1971) 9

National Labor Relations Board v. Mackay Radio & Telegraph Co., 304 U.S. 333 (1938) 11

Sarelas v. Porikos, 320 F. 2d 827 (7th Cir. 1963), cert. den. 375 U.S. 985 (1964) 11

Swam v. United States, 327 F. 2d 431 (7th Cir. 1964), cert. den. 379 U.S. 852 (1964) 9

U. S. Fidelity & Guaranty Co. v. Lawrenson, 34 F.R.D. 121 (1964) 11

United States Fidelity & Guaranty Co. v. Lawrenson, 334 F. 2d 464 (4th Cir. 1964), cert. den. 379 U.S. 869 (1964) 9, 12

Rules

Federal Rules of Civil Procedure:

Rule 59(b) 5

Rule 60(b) 2, 6, 7, 8, 9

Rule 60(b) (1) & (6) 7

Rule 78 ..... 9, 11

Revised Rules of the Supreme Court:

Rule 19 2

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AMERICAN AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE COMPANY,

Respondent.

BRIEF IN OPPOSITION TO PETITION FOR WRIT OF CERTIORARI

To the Honorable Chief Justice and the Associate Justices of the Supreme Court of the United States:

The respondent, American Automobile Insurance Company, herewith files the following Brief in Opposition to the Petition for Writ of Certiorari in the above-entitled case:

We submit to this Court that the uncontroverted facts in the case at bar demonstrate conclusively that the questions presented for review by petitioner are either not raised by the record or are wholly without merit, that the decision

below turns upon its own facts and will affect few if anyone besides the parties hereto, and that there are thus no special and important reasons for review by this Court within the meaning of Rule 19, Revised Rules of the Supreme Court of the United States.

OPINION BELOW

The opinion of the trial court involved herein is not that appended to the petition for certiorari as Appendix A, but was an Order Denying Plaintiff's Motion for Reinstatement and in the Alternative Motion for Relief From Judgment or Order. This order denying relief under Rule 60(b), Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, is reproduced in Appendix A to this brief.

It was that order denying Rule 60(b) relief that was affirmed per curiam by the court of appeals (Appendix B of Petition).

STATEMENT OF THE CASE

This action was brought by petitioner upon a homeowner's insurance policy for alleged hail damage to his dwelling in Dallas, Texas. Jurisdiction of the United States District Court was based upon diversity of citizenship and thus Texas substantive law controls. The amount in controversy is $10,714.42. The Texas insurance contract contained a provision that if the parties failed to agree on the amount of loss, each party was to appoint an appraiser and the appraisers were to select an umpire, and the two appraisers

and the umpire were then to determine the amount of loss. This is a valid and enforceable provision in Texas. *Glens Falls Insurance Co. v. Peters*, 386 S.W. 2d 529 (Tex. Sup. Ct. 1965). One of respondent's defenses to the action was that it had timely demanded such an appraisal prior to suit, but that no such appraisal had been conducted.

A formal pre-trial conference was held by the trial court with the petitioner's first counsel attending. A lengthy pre-trial order was entered on June 5, 1969, which stated that there was an issue of fact between the parties as to whether petitioner complied with respondent's request for appraisal. However, after the pre-trial, the parties agreed to appraise the loss pursuant to the provisions of the insurance policy.

The events which then followed are recited in petitioner's brief in chief in the court of appeals as follows:

> "In compliance with the [respondent's] requests during the pre-trial conference to arbitrate [sic], the [petitioner], in order to aid in the disposition of this action, agreed to begin arbitration [sic] rather than have an immediate hearing. On June 23, 1969, the [petitioner] notified the [respondent] that in line with this agreement he had appointed an appraiser to represent his cause. The [respondent] made a similar selection on June 26, 1969. An umpire was selected and the damage appraised by these parties on July 23, 1969. The resulting award failed to satisfy 10% of the actual replacement cost incurred by the [petitioner]. Due to the extreme difference between the amount awarded by these appraisers and the cost already incurred by the [petitioner] plus estimates of future costs by the independent appraisers, the [petitioner] sought to have the claim reevaluated by the Court. Although arbitration [sic] awards are not as a general rule reviewable, evi-

> dence of mistake, failure to exercise honest judgment, bad faith, fraud, duress or other impeaching circumstances may be plead to set aside an award. [Citations omitted.]
>
> "Reluctance of the [petitioner's] original attorney to proceed against the [respondent] on the basis of bias, failure to exercise honest judgment, and other circumstances generally indicating reviewability of the award, lead to a disagreement between the [petitioner] and his then counsel which culminated in a filing of a motion to withdraw as counsel on August 28, 1969. On that date, the Court's order permitted the withdrawal of the attorney of record for the [petitioner] and further ordered the [petitioner] to retain new counsel and make an appearance with that counsel within 30 days." (Appellant's Brief in the Court of Appeals,[1] pp. 3-4.)

That order in addition to permitting petitioner's first counsel to withdraw, specifically stated:

> "IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the Clerk of this Court will serve the [petitioner] with copy of this order by mail at the following address: 5142 Palomar Street, Dallas, Texas 75229, and that unless new counsel for [petitioner] files an appearance herein within thirty (30) days from this date, an order dismissing this action for want of prosecution will be entered." (Order Allowing Withdrawal of Counsel, Appendix to the Briefs in the Court of Appeals,[2] pp. 17-18.)

On or about the date of the above order, August 28, 1969, petitioner contacted the office of his second counsel and retained his services to appear in the trial court. (Apt's.

[1] Appellant's [petitioner's] brief in chief in the court of appeals will hereafter be cited as "Apt's. Br."

[2] The appendix in the court of appeals, which was printed and contains all the papers in the trial court except the briefs, will hereafter be referred to as "A."

Br. 4.) A copy of the trial court's order was received in the second counsel's offices on or about September 3, 1969. (Apt's. Br. 4.) Said new counsel was in communication with petitioner concerning this case on September 24, 1969. (Memorandum Brief on Plaintiff's Plea for Reinstatement and/or Relief from Judgment or Order, p. 3, that brief is attached as Appendix B.)

Upon failure to comply with the trial court's order requiring the appearance of the new counsel, the action was dismissed on October 1, 1969 by judgment of the trial court (Appendix A of Pet.) On that very day, October 1, 1969, petitioner in his memorandum brief admits receiving a copy of the judgment dismissing the case for want of prosecution. (Appendix B to this Brief.)

However, petitioner did not file a motion for new trial until October 15, 1969 (A. 19), which motion was out of term under Rule 59(b), Federal Rules of Civil Procedure. No notice of appeal from the judgment was filed because petitioner wanted "to prevent action in two courts, simultaneously, on the same point" (Apt's. Br. 37); although petitioner did not mind filing a second suit in the trial court on November 10, 1969 against respondent for the same hail damages. (The dismissal by a different judge of that second action is presently on appeal by petitioner to the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit in cause number 71-1894.)

The first reference to relief from the judgment under Rule 60, Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, did not come

until petitioner's amended motion was filed on December 22, 1969 (A. 20). It is the order denying that relief (Appendix A to this Brief) that gives rise to the current petition for certiorari.

ARGUMENT

Thus, notwithstanding that petitioner voluntarily participated in an appraisal of his loss but contended that he should not be bound by the appraisal since it was only 10% of what he expected, notwithstanding the express mandate of the trial court's order of August 28, 1969 requiring the appearance of new counsel within 30 days, which order was well-known to plaintiff and his second counsel, notwithstanding that petitioner knew of the judgment dismissing his case within time both to file a timely motion for new trial and to take an appeal, and notwithstanding his deliberate election to proceed by filing a second independent action on the same controversy, he now seeks to use the denial of his later motion for relief under Rule 60(b), F.R.C.P., as the basis for invoking this Court's discretion and asserting that this is an important and special case.

I.

This case is uniquely controlled by its own peculiar facts.

Actually, it is difficult to conceive of a case more narrow in scope than the one at bar. How often would any court find a suiter that first defaulted on the merits before suit

(no appraisal under the policy), then "agreed" to comply after pre-trial (the appraisal), but rejected that result (since it was only 10% of what he wanted), thus fired his first counsel, failed to comply with a specific order of the court (to have new counsel enter an appearance), failed to move for new trial, elected not to appeal, elected to file an independent second suit, and then complains because he did not get a full dress hearing on his later Rule 60(b) motion (unsupported by any affidavit or other evidence) even though his second suit was then pending in the same court? We submit that a more defaulting petitioner would be hard to find and that a case more controlled by its own facts cannot be found.

Therefore by no stretch of the imagination can this case, either by amount in controversy or by the law applicable to the facts, be considered a special and important case.

II.

The decision below is clearly correct.

A. *Relief from a final judgment may not be used as a substitute for an appeal.*

This Court has established the principle that where a party has chosen not to appeal from a judgment, he cannot be later relieved therefrom under Rule 60(b)(1) & (6). *Ackermann v. United States*, 340 U.S. 193 (1950). It is uncontroverted that petitioner had the time both to move for a new trial in the trial court and to appeal, but he made the free, calculated and deliberate choice not to appeal, for as he

stated: "no appeal was taken from the initial judgment to prevent action in two courts, simultaneously, on the same point" (Apt's. Br. 37).

Such reasoning makes no sense at all. Relief from a judgment under Rule 60(b) should not even be considered until after an appeal has been denied or the time for perfecting such has expired. Rule 60(b) relief is not available as a substitute for the appeal that one deliberately chooses not to take. *Farmers Co-Op v. Strand*, 382 F. 2d 224 (8th Cir. 1967); cert. denied 389 U.S. 1014 (1967). *Strand* is particularly applicable to the case at bar because it too involved a plaintiff's filing of a second separate lawsuit which was also dismissed.

B. *Under the facts of the case petitioner received the hearing to which he was entitled.*

We have attached to this brief (as Appendix C) a copy of the notice from the clerk concerning the case at bar. It will be noted that said notice provides that no motion will be filed without an accompanying brief, and that:

> "Every motion is considered submitted within ten (10) days of service of such motion and accompanying brief. No oral argument will be permitted except upon the Court's initiative."

This notice, of course, was addressed to petitioner's first counsel; however, upon his discharge the second counsel acquired petitioner's file. (Apt's. Br. 30.)

Pursuant to the local rule or order of the trial court, motions are determined upon the moving papers and oral argu-

ment is not allowed unless the court directs. Such a local rule is contemplated by Rule 78, F.R.C.P., appears to be found throughout the nation, and thus is well-established procedure. *Morrow v. Topping*, 437 F. 2d 1155 (9th Cir. 1971); *United States Fidelity & Guaranty Co. v. Lawrenson*, 334 F. 2d 464 (4th Cir. 1964), cert. denied 379 U.S. 869 (1964). Such being the case, it naturally follows that any assertions in a motion not supported by the record itself should be supported by affidavit or other appropriate proof submitted with the motion. Therefore, the granting of any hearing in this case was within the discretion of the trial court, and there was no impediment to the trial court carefully considering the motion as he did (A. 22) on the moving papers.

C. Relief from a final judgment is to be granted only under exceptional circumstances which petitioner failed to show.

It is well-established that Rule 60(b) provides for extraordinary relief and may only be invoked upon a showing of exceptional circumstances. *Hulson v. Atchison T. & S.F. Ry.*, 289 F. 2d 726 (7th Cir. 1961), cert. denied 368 U.S. 835 (1961); *Farmers Co-Op v. Strand*, 382 F. 2d 224 (8th Cir. 1967), cert. denied 289 U.S. 1014 (1967). As we have stated above, such a motion cannot be used as a substitute for an appeal, *Ackermann v. United States*, 340 U.S. 193 (1950); *Farmers Co-Op v. Strand*, 382 F. 2d 224 (8th Cir. 1967), cert. denied 289 U.S. 1014 (1967), and likewise such motion cannot be used as a means of enlarging, by indirection, the time for taking an appeal. *Swam v. United States*, 327 F. 2d 431 (7th Cir. 1964), cert. denied 379 U.S. 852 (1964).

Therefore, the petitioner having elected to file a second suit and not to appeal received the hearing to which he was entitled; the motion for relief from the judgment was properly denied, and the affirmance by the intermediate court was correct. Petitioner complains that too much leeway is left to the individual court in passing upon such a motion; however, since petitioner admits that relief under Rule 60(b) is addressed to the sound discretion of the trial court, it follows as a matter of course that the exercise of such discretion must depend upon the individual facts in each individual case. Therefore, we submit it would be inappropriate and undesirable for this Court to now set forth in this case specific retroactive guidelines for the application of Rule 60(b) as suggested by the petitioner.

III.

There is no constitutional right to a specific type of hearing or to an opportunity to present oral argument thereat.

The petitioner attempts to make a constitutional issue out of the trial court's denying him what he calls a "hearing." The error in this position is that he received the hearing to which he was entitled by the United States Constitution. That is, the petitioner was free to submit any affidavits or other evidence to the trial court but he chose not to, and he was free to submit any argument that he desired in support of his motion which he in fact did in the form of a memorandum brief (Appendix B to this Brief.) This brief, it seems to us, fairly well advocated the petitioner's position before the trial court.

According to the rules of the trial court, the motion was deemed submitted ten (10) days after it was filed. The moving papers failed to reveal any necessity for or a specific request for some further hearing as petitioner now asserts he was entitled to. Those papers gave the trial judge everything needed for him to decide that his discretion was not with the petitioner. It is difficult to appreciate how a further hearing could have improved petitioner's position so as to negate his deliberate choice not to move for a new trial or appeal.

As was expressly held by this Court in *F.C.C. v. Station WJR*, 337 U.S. 265 (1949), the due process clause of the Fifth Amendment to the Federal Constitution does not require an oral argument as a matter of procedural due process. The Fifth Amendment guarantees no particular form of procedure; it protects only substantive rights. *National Labor Relations Board v. Mackay Radio & Telegraph Co.*, 304 U.S. 333 (1938). Such an oral hearing on motions in the district court is not required. *Sarelas v. Porikos*, 320 F. 2d 827 (7th Cir. 1963), cert. denied 375 U.S. 985 (1964).

That is, a fair hearing is all that is required by the Constitution, and that hearing can, of course, be solely upon written evidence and briefs. This is precisely what Rule 78, F.R.C.P. provides.

Petitioner cites *U.S. Fidelity & Guaranty Co. v. Lawrenson*, 34 F.R.D. 121 (1964) (in his Petition at p. 9) as an example of a district court opinion holding that not all motions are entitled to an oral hearing, as if the district court

opinion in that case was the only court that considered the matter. Actually, that case came all the way to this Court. See *United States Fidelity & Guaranty Co. v. Lawrenson*, 334 F. 2d 464 (4th Cir. 1964), cert. denied 379 U.S. 869 (1964). We have cited the above reported court of appeal opinion earlier in this brief for the proposition that leaving a hearing to the discretion of the district court is wise. That opinion in *Lawrenson*, upheld just such a local rule as exists in the instant case, established pursuant to Rule 78, F.R.C.P.

In conclusion, we thus submit that the petitioner's purported constitutional question is nonexistent and without merit.

CONCLUSION

For the foregoing reasons it is respectfully submitted that this petition for a writ of certiorari should be denied.

September 30, 1971.

Respectfully submitted,

LARRY L. GOLLAHER,
Counsel for Respondent.

APPENDIX A

IN THE DISTRICT COURT OF THE UNITED STATES IN AND FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS DALLAS DISTRICT

Civil Action No. CA 3-2882-A

HARRY K. WASOFF,

Plaintiff,

v.

AMERICAN AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE COMPANY,

Defendant.

ORDER DENYING PLAINTIFF'S MOTION FOR REINSTATEMENT AND IN THE ALTERNATIVE MOTION FOR RELIEF FROM JUDGMENT OR ORDER

The Court, having considered with care Plaintiff's Motion for Reinstatement and in the alternative Motion for Relief From Judgment or Order, finds and determines that this motion should be and the same hereby is DENIED.

SIGNED and ORDERED ENTERED the 17th day of September, 1970.

/s/ JOE E. ESTES

United States District Judge

APPENDIX B

IN THE DISTRICT COURT OF THE UNITED STATES IN AND FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS DALLAS DISTRICT

Civil Action No. CA 3-2882-A

HARRY K. WASOFF,

Plaintiff,

v.

AMERICAN AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE COMPANY,

Defendant.

MEMORANDUM BRIEF ON PLAINTIFF'S PLEA FOR REINSTATEMENT AND/OR RELIEF FROM JUDGMENT OR ORDER

Plaintiff in this cause has filed a Motion for Reinstatement and/or Relief from an Order dismissing this cause with prejudice for two reasons, viz:

1. Following the withdrawal of the original attorney retained by Plaintiff, HARRY K. WASOFF, on August 14, 1969, Plaintiff made careful and honest efforts to retain another attorney, but in so doing, has caused some delays to the attorneys ultimately retained; and

2. That Mr. Robert A. Fanning, present attorney for Plaintiff was out of town when notified that he had been retained by Mr. WASOFF, and was unable to file a Notice of Appearance within the time specified so as to prevent Dismissal for want of Prosecution which occurred on October 1, 1969.

DISCUSSION

Plaintiff's Motion for Reinstatement and/or a New Trial centers upon Subsection (B) of Rule 60, 28 U.S.C.A. Rule

60(B) provides that "* * * upon Motion and upon such terms as are just, the Court may relieve a party or his legal representative from a final judgment, order, or proceeding for the following reasons:

(1) Mistake, inadvertence, surprise or excusable neglect; * * * (6) Any other reason justifying relief from the operation of the judgment. The Motion shall be made during a reasonable time, and for reasons (1), * * * not more than one year from the judgment, order or proceedings is entered or taken * * *"

* * * * *

Note: argument on law and citations omitted

* * * * *

Reviewing the facts in the present instance, on the 28th day of August, 1969, an Order allowing withdrawal of counsel then retained by Plaintiff was entered by the Court, the same Order stated that unless new counsel for Plaintiff filed an appearance within thirty (30) days from that date that the action would be dismissed for want of prosecution. Mr. Robert A. Fanning, the attorney ultimately retained by Mr. Wasoff in this action was not in Dallas on the date the Order was entered nor when the Order was actually mailed to Plaintiff several days later. Mr. Fanning was not in communication with Plaintiff concerning his case until September 24, 1969. On October 1, 1969, the Plaintiff HARRY K. WASOFF, received a Judgment dismissing his case for want of prosecution.

Under the circumstances, there was no reasonable time in which Mr. Fanning could have filed an appearance within the specified thirty (30) days, in part for simple lack of knowledge of the facts that he should have done so. Except for this one matter of inadvertance in the filing of an appearance, your Plaintiff HARRY K. WASOFF has done everything necessary to fully and completely prosecute his case. Plaintiff has not been responsible for any unreasonable or unnecessary delay in bringing this matter to trial.

CONCLUSION

The dismissal of Plaintiff's original cause of action was due solely to inadvertence and oversight. Any neglect in the prosecution of the cause of action was clearly within the excusable category, as "excusable neglect" as defined by the cases dealing with the matter. There has been no prejudice, either in fact or by implication to the Defendant in this matter as a result of the very few days' delay in the Plaintiff's present attorney's appearance into the case. Consequently the onerous burden of dismissal with prejudice laid upon Plaintiff on October 1, 1969, should be lifted and Plaintiff should be allowed to continue in his original cause of action and the Order of Dismissal with prejudice should be vacated.

Respectfully submitted,

FANNING & HARPER

By: /s/ ROBERT A. FANNING

Robert A. Fanning

4040 First National Bank Bldg.
Dallas, Texas 75202 741-6461

APPENDIX C

12-6-68

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS DALLAS DIVISION

To: L. W. Anderson
Franklin H. Perry

Re: Civil Action No. 3-2882-A

HARRY K. WASOFF v. AMERICAN AUTO. INS. CO.

NOTICE

The following are instructions for the handling of all cases assigned to Judge Joe E. Estes, Chief Judge:

Pre-trial conferences will be held in all cases, and the attorneys who will try the case will attend all such conferences. Pre-trial orders, approved by counsel for each of the parties, will be prepared by plaintiff's attorney and presented to Judge Estes for his approval. Suggested forms for the order may be obtained from the Clerk's office.

No motion will be filed unless it is accompanied by a brief memorandum of authorities in support thereof.

Every motion is considered submitted within 10 days of service of such motion and accompanying brief. No oral argument will be permitted except upon the Court's initiative. All motions not disposed of before the pre-trial conference will be heard and argued at that time.

In those cases presently pending in which motions have been filed, the moving attorney will submit a memorandum of authorities in support thereof at least 10 days prior to any pre-trial conference of the case.

In making jury requests, strict compliance with Rule 38(b).; Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, will be required.

Except as provided in Rule 15(a), no amendment of pleadings will be filed without leave of Court or written consent of the adverse party.

Settings will be made by Judge Estes on his own motion. A list of settings will be mailed to the interested attorneys approximately 30 days prior to the pre-trial conference.

Bailey F. Rankin, *Clerk*